

Reviewing and Updating the SWAP

Congressional guidelines for State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP) require that they contain “descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed 10 years.” The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) plans to revise its SWAP every five years. By adopting this timeline, the WGFD will continue to be proactive in conserving Wyoming's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their habitats.

Updating Activities Prior to the 2015 Revision of the SWAP

After Wyoming's revised SWAP is approved by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (WGFC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), presentations are planned for WGFD's Regional Meetings to familiarize employees with the plan. Presentations will be conducted at similar meetings for other state and federal wildlife and natural resource agencies operating in Wyoming to increase general awareness about the SWAP and recent changes.

The WGFD's Habitat Technical Advisory Group (HTAG) annually reviews and makes funding recommendations on the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program and other sensitive species projects. Funding criteria for these programs will be revised and made internally and externally available to grant applicants, based on conservation and monitoring recommendations within the 2010 SWAP. HTAG will continue its role in facilitating interagency coordination on SWAP-related issues, including providing recommendations to the WGFD administration on potential updates to Wyoming's SWAP in response to new research, changing threats, partnership opportunities, and state or federal initiatives or directives.

The SWAP Interagency Advisory Team (IAT) will meet bi-annually to review updates on the implementation of the SWAP including new and completed projects and also to exchange

information between agencies on SWAP-related issues.

The SWAP SGCN Species Account Database will be updated as new information on monitoring, research, threats, and conservation projects becomes available.

In the spring of 2011, the WGFD plans to participate, together with the Wyoming State Office of the Bureau of Land Management, in a five-day workshop hosted by the Heinz Foundation on SWAP performance indicators. Established performance indicators will help to further target conservation actions and refine monitoring protocols.

The WGFD will participate as appropriate in regional wildlife conservation initiatives that are conducting research and facilitating coordination on SWAP issues across political boundaries. The USFWS has established Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) to advance science and to assist states in creating and implementing adaptation strategies for climate change and other regional wildlife issues.¹ Habitat and species vulnerability assessments, as well as down-scaled climate change modeling have been recommended by various agencies and organizations as potential research topics for LCCs. The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), which works to coordinate regional bird conservation activities, is investigating ways to advance shared priority research needs and conservation projects identified within the SWAPs of member states.

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and the Western Governors' Association (WGA) are also involved in collaborative wildlife conservation efforts that are being incorporated into SWAP planning and implementation. The *Greater Sage-grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy* and

¹ While Wyoming contains portions of the Great Plains, Southern Rockies, Great Northern, and Plains and Prairie Potholes LCCs, the latter two make up the largest proportion of the state and are the primary LCCs in which the WGFD is currently most active.

Western Regional Wildlife Decision Support Systems are two examples of WAFWA and WGA efforts. The WGFD is also providing input on a multi-state project being conducted by NatureServe to enhance connectivity planning in SWAPs. Additionally, the WGFD is cooperating in a USFWS effort to establish a GIS mapping system to track SWG projects in western states.

The WGFD plans to add a vulnerability assessment data layer to its SWAP SGCN priority area identification process. This layer will further refine locations of SWAP priority areas by incorporating information on projected landscape changes from future energy development, rural subdivision, climate change, and invasive species.

Changes to SGCN designations and SGCN species accounts will be considered on an ongoing basis as compelling information becomes available. The WGFD will report to the WGFC in the winter of 2012 about a process and timeline for effectively conducting SGCN status reviews during the interim period before the 2015 revision of the SWAP. Decisions regarding SGCN re-classifications will be made by the WGFD Director's Office and reviewed by the WGFC before being submitted to the USFWS for approval. The progress on achieving SGCN survey goals is reported annually in the WGFD Governor's report on performance measures.

Preparing for the 2015 Revision

Wyoming's SWAP is currently planned to be revised in 2015. The 2010 revision of the SWAP was a large task facilitated by a full-time SWAP Coordinator in the WGFD and also aided by numerous individuals and working groups. WGFD does not anticipate that the next revision of the SWAP will be as large a task as the 2010 revision.

The formal revision of the SWAP will begin 18 months prior to the date the SWAP is to be submitted to the USFWS for approval. The revision process will include:

1. The WGFD will publically announce its intentions to revise the SWAP within its quarterly *SWAP Newsletter*, *Wyoming Wildlife News* bimonthly newsletter, and the weekly statewide news release packet. Announcements will include information on how to submit suggestion on potential SWAP changes and improvements. Throughout the revision, the *SWAP Newsletter* will be used to update the public and other stakeholders on issues and developments.
2. Any changes to federal SWAP revision guidelines including the eight required congressional elements for SWAPs will be reviewed and incorporated.
3. Key individuals within the WGFD, partnering agencies, and stakeholders will be surveyed regarding 2010 SWAP successes and areas in need of improvement. These interviews will include investigation into potential changes to the main topics addressed within the chapter on Wyoming's Leading Wildlife Conservation Challenges.
4. Successes in achieving conservation and monitoring recommendations identified in the 2010 SWAP will be quantified.
5. Priority area maps will be re-evaluated based upon updated SGCN distribution information and land use GIS data layers.
6. Wyoming's SGCN will be reviewed for potential changes in status and conservation priority.
7. The 2010 SWAP terrestrial habitat types, aquatic basins, and leading wildlife conservation challenges sections will be distributed within the WGFD and externally to key wildlife and natural resource conservation experts and stakeholders. Input from these reviewers will aid the SWAP Coordinator in identifying needed updates and changes regarding threats, research needs, conservation actions, and monitoring efforts. The content of these sections will be re-evaluated in conjunction with the eight congressionally required

SWAP elements. Needed changes will be incorporated.

8. Drafts of the revised SWAP will go through an internal and external comment period and approval process. Steps will include posting the revised SWAP on the WGFD website and reviewing the plan at public meetings before it is submitted to the WGFC and USFWS for approval.